

Venture Downtown
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan J. Sparrow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R" and "S".

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

April 2008

Graduation: Spring 2008

Sp 0011
Th 0011
LD
248-1
248-1
2006
R362

Abstract

The majority of Ball State students do not take time to explore Muncie to see the positives but only see through the eyes of a Ball State student who stays within certain boundaries. Muncie has a negative connotation that students do not try to disprove. By researching a few of the businesses downtown and giving students this information, students might look at Muncie a little differently and see the positive aspects. Previous work in the field is usually just stories published in the Daily News about events downtown. Ball Bearings, Ball State's online publication, has examined some of the businesses downtown but not downtown as a whole to an in-depth extent. I am giving students a peek into a few of the businesses that might be interesting to them, a map of the hot spots to try and more information that would help them get around downtown easily. The goal of the project is to spark interest in Ball State students to step out of their boundaries and go out and explore the place they will live for the next several years.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr. Ryan Sparrow for advising me through this project. He was extremely helpful in making the web version of the project more focused and in improving my photography skills.

I would like to thank Drew Preston-Hainz for helping me with Flash CS3, the program that was used for the web version of the project. It would not have been as animated without his help.

I would also like to thank Ball Bearings, Ball State's online publication, who allowed me to publish my project on their site. Now it is online and accessible to much more people than I could have reached myself.

Rationale

The main reason I wanted to do this project is stated clearly in the abstract: the majority of Ball State students do not take time to explore Muncie to see the positives but only see through the eyes of a Ball State student who stays within certain boundaries. Muncie has a negative connotation that students do not try to disprove. By researching a few of the businesses downtown and giving students this information, students might look at Muncie a little differently and see the positive aspects. Previous work in the field is usually just stories published in the Daily News about events downtown. Ball Bearings, Ball State's online publication, has examined some of the businesses downtown but not downtown as a whole to an in-depth extent. I am giving students a peek into a few of the businesses that might be interesting to them, a map of the hot spots to try and more information that would help them get around downtown easily. The goal of the project is to spark interest in Ball State students to step out of their boundaries and go out and explore the place they will live for the next several years.

I chose three businesses that were appropriate for Ball State students and that were not very well known about. I chose Morton's Pub & Grub because it is a restaurant that just opened up in October. It serves homemade Irish food and offers vegetarian and vegan options. I chose the Downtown Food Stand because it is a new business, opened up in May 2007, but also because it is a new type of business in the Muncie community. It carries natural, organic and locally grown foods. For students who love fresh produce or conscious of where their meat came from, then they would also love this store. I chose Kirk's Bike Shop because there is a decent amount of students who ride bikes on Ball State's campus. The business has also been around since 1865, showing that it is doing something right.

I chose to include the other downtown elements to make students feel more comfortable about venturing downtown. If they see a map or photos and become familiar with the area before traveling downtown, they will be more at ease when looking for a place. I also hoped this extra elements added to a student's curiosity to explore the downtown area.

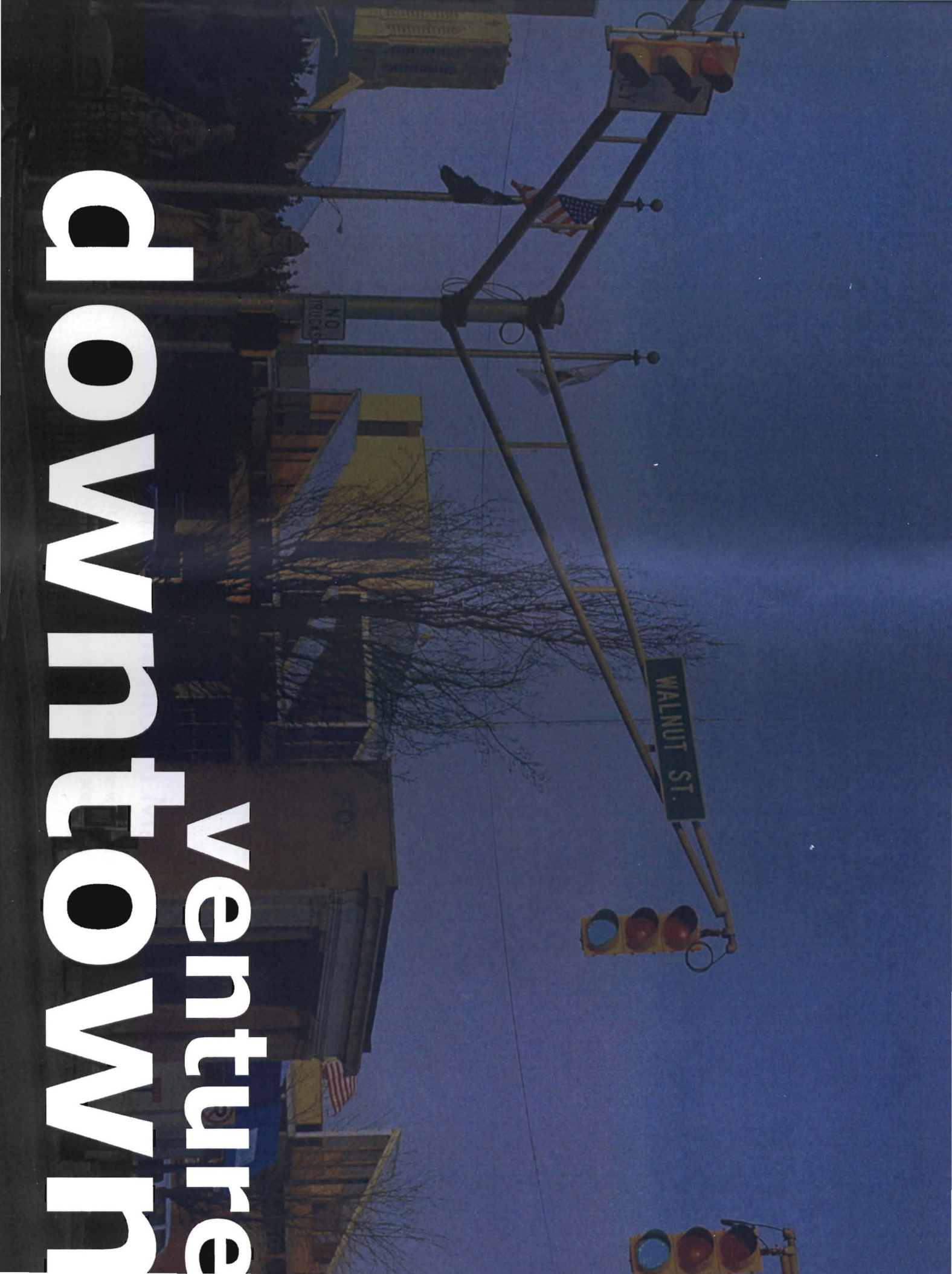
For me, this project was all about moving outside of the comfort zone and trying something new. This theme was enveloped into the whole project. I wanted to portray this feeling as well as feel it myself as I was putting the project together. As a journalism student I have taken classes on writing and reporting but never did too much of it seriously. I was also interested in photography but never got the chance to take an undergraduate course in it. As a graphics sequence

student I knew design, layout and the programs needed to put together the project. So I decided to take on the challenge of doing it all. I took the opportunity to report, record and edit audio, take and edit photographs and put together a print and web version of the project. Yes, it was definitely challenging at moments when I would have to go back downtown to get better photographs, or re-interview people to get the best audio or re-work the web version completely to make it a bigger size. But it was definitely worth it. I learned so much about the ways of reporting and photography and even about myself. I really enjoyed talking to the people downtown and became more comfortable reporting during the semester. I loved learning about camera techniques and taking good photographs. Overall, the experience was beneficial to me and I can only hope that it can inspire someone else to step out of his boundaries.

Bibliography

Jason Allardt – Manager at Kirk's Bike Shop
Anthony Reece – Employee at Kirk's Bike Shop
Ty Morton – owner of Morton's Pub & Grub
Issac Pelering – musician at Morton's Pub & Grub
Dave Ring – co-owner of Downtown Food Stand
Tom Gordy – co-owner of Downtown Food Stand

down town venture



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Honors College Thesis
Ball State University
Advisor: Ryan Sparrow
Spring 2008

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The only grocery store in downtown Muncie, the Downtown Farm Stand offers fresh produce and organic meat.

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Around since 1865, Kirk's Bike Shop is a reliable place to shop for bicycles and bike accessories.

Morton's Pub & Grub **13**

Just opened in October 2008, Morton's Pub & Grub offers rich, homemade Irish food.

Muncie Downtown Map **19**

Check out to see where the downtown hot spots are located.

FARM STAND

125 E. Main St.
Muncie, IN 47305
(765) 288 - 3775

A rusty red building sits quietly on the corner of Main and Mulberry streets. A golden sign, boldening the store's presence, accents the brick color. Inside, cereals, soups, pastas and peanut butter line the shelves. Milk, cheese and yogurt stock the refrigerator. A small quantity of fresh produce is stored behind the counter. Clumps of fruit and spices are scattered throughout this local Muncie store: the Downtown Farm Stand.

Although this may sound just like any other grocery, it differs greatly in the quality of its food. Every type of food found in the store is organic, natural or locally grown from the whole grain pasta to the fresh sausage links.





(FAR RIGHT): Dave Ring helps scan grocery items and bag them for customers. The Downtown Food Stand opened in May 2007 and sees a large portion of its customers regularly.

(RIGHT): The Downtown Food Stand carries a large variety of dry foods including soups, beans, coffee, pastas, nuts, condiments and spices. The store also carries other goods such as milk, cheese, fresh produce and meat and natural household cleaners.

(BELOW): Dave Ring bags a customer's groceries in a recycleable bag after scanning their prices.



(BELOW): Several wooden baskets hold different types of potatoes at the Food Stand.

(LEFT): Tom Gordy reshelves the refrigerator after a shipment came.

(FAR LEFT): Ginger root, avacado and pears sit in weaved baskets to be sold.





Co-owners Dave Ring and Tom Gordy combined their talents to open the Farm Stand in May 2007. As local farmers, the two believe in the sustainability of local and organic farming. Knowing that Muncie did not have any such store, Ring and Gordy decided to open one for three main reasons:

“We wanted to provide an outlet for area local, organic or sustainable farmers, and we wanted to provide a small grocery store for the people of downtown Muncie and provide an organic food store for Muncie in general,” Ring said.

The Downtown Farm Stand opened its doors in May 2007 after Ring and Gordy rented a space, cleaned it up and stocked some basic organic food items. Ring used an extensive email list of customers from his downtown food market stand to alert people of the store.

The Downtown Farm Stand now sees regular customers every week, about 80 to 90 percent of the total business. Ring and Gordy order the fresh produce and organic meat about twice a week to keep up with the demand. Part of the fresh produce is picked from Ring and Gordy's own farms but they also buy from local produce and meat companies.

"We want to make sure that what we get is the healthiest food we can get because, after all, that is what sustains our metabolism is having good quality food," Gordy said.

The Downtown Farm Stand can offer Ball State students who are interested in sustainable farming and organic food a one-stop shop. It carries dairy, produce, meat and several varieties of canned and boxed food. The Farm Stand is even planning on carrying pre-made organic food that can be heated up quickly, a staple for a college students' diet.



peanut butter, jelly,
and more packaged items
at the Downtown Food Stand.
Cardboard boxes holding fresh
fruit and a display of plants.



Although the men admit that it was hard to get the store started and running efficiently, they still enjoy what they have accomplished and provided for the city of Muncie.

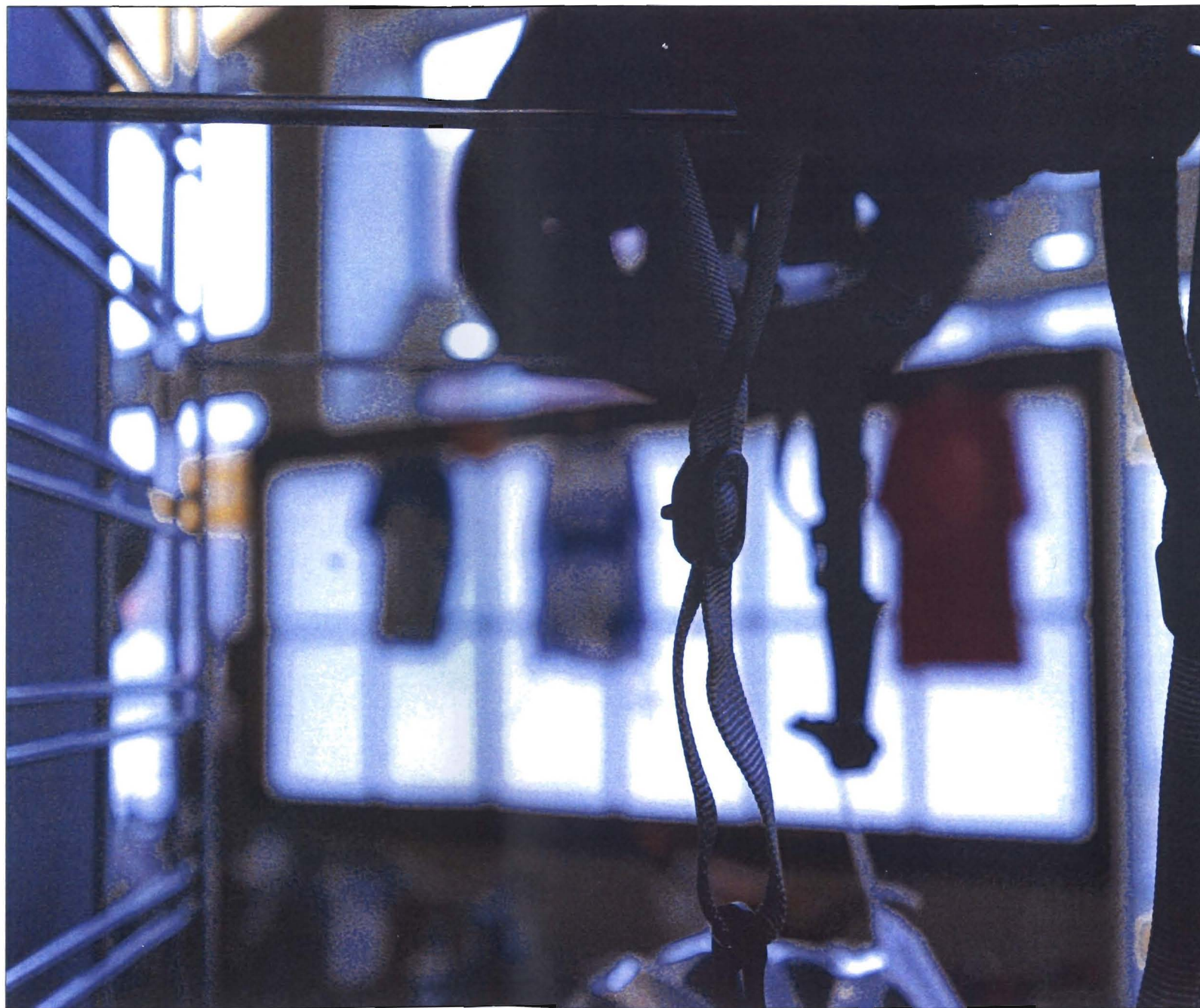
"My passion is a strong belief that sustainable and organic agriculture can transform societies, so I enjoy selling and talking to people who believe in similar things that I do," Ring said.

We want to make sure that what we get is the healthiest food we can get because, after all, that is what sustains our metabolism is having good quality food.

Tom Gordy, co-owner

7

(RIGHT):
A helmet rests
on its shelf with
cords hanging
at Kirk's Bike
Shop. The store
sells bicycles,
and bicycle
accessories,
including helmets
and t-shirts.
(FAR RIGHT):
Bikes line the
shelves in the
store. Kirk's sells
men's, women's
and children's
bicycles.



1865
1875
1885

KIRK'S BIKE SHOP



Rows of men's, women's and children's bikes line the walls, downsizing from the largest to the smallest. Each patiently awaits a new owner, a new rider, somebody to scuff the tires and wear down the handle bar grips. Bike accessories from clothing to helmets to seats are arranged in clusters throughout the store. The repair shop rests in the back but clearly in sight. Spare tires hang in a row on the ceiling. Various tools decorate the walls, waiting to be used. A soft murmur of speech and noise floats around between spokes and gears at Kirk's Bike Shop.

Kirk's Bike Shop sits on the corner of Walnut and Jackson Streets, in the midst of downtown. Locally owned since 1865, the store has served the Delaware and surrounding counties for years. The first bikes sold were the "high-wheel" bikes that came before the automobile. As bike technology advanced, Kirk's became a long time provider of Schwinn and Trek bicycles.

(BELOW): Sturdy bicycle gloves line the shelves along with other accessories. The gloves keep hands from

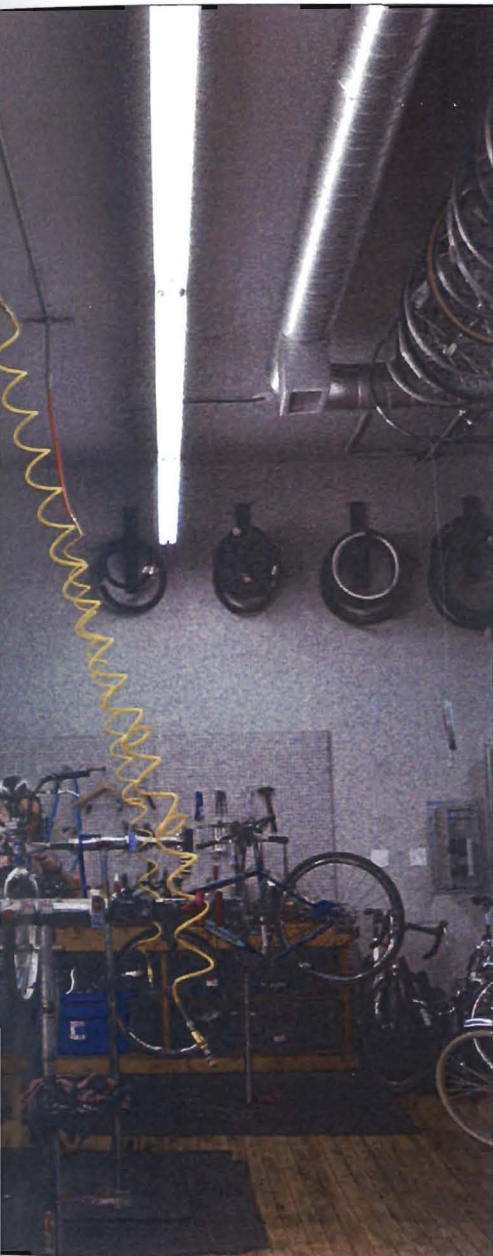
Jason Allardt, who has been managing the store for the past two years, recognizes why the business has lasted for more than 35 years. The laid-back atmosphere of the store provides customers with a comfortable environment to ask questions and purchase items without the salesman pressure.

“An important thing with small business is customer service and that’s what we try to focus on,” he said. “Keep the customer coming back.”

Allardt picked up his passion for bicycling from his Dad and has been involved with it his whole life. Allardt and his co-worker, Anthony Reece, believe that once you become involved with bicycling, it becomes addicting. Reece works in the repair store, fixing and tuning bikes.

“I’ve been doing this as a kid, and doing it professionally since ’96 and when I moved to Muncie to go to Ball State, it was just natural thing for me to go to the nearest bike shop to find a job,” Reece said.





(LEFT): Anthony Reece works on a bike in Kirk's Bike Shop repair area. A variety of tools and spare tires are strewn about.

(TOP LEFT): Anthony Reece and Jason Allardt help a customer. Outstanding customer service is a top priority at Kirk's Bike Shop.

(BELOW LEFT): Clusters of metal spokes sit grouped together by different sizes.

(RIGHT): Kirk's Bike Shop offers a wide range of bikes as well as bike accessories such as shorts and shirts, gloves, sunglasses and more.
(BELOW): Anthony Reece laughs as he works on repairing a bicycle part.



As a part of this, with
small business, a customer
service and that's what we
try to do as we keep the
customer coming back.

— Kirk



(LEFT): Kirk's Bike Shop carries bike seats in all different shapes and sizes.

(BELOW): A bike waiting for repairs sits on the ground.



The store offers a wide selection of bicycles and accessories including bike clothing, gloves, sunglasses and bike pumps. Allardt, Reece and their co-workers are always willing to help their customers and give out as much knowledge as they have. Ball State students might take an interest in bicycles as a mode of transportation because of the increase in gas prices.

"If they [students] see more bikes around Ball State, it might make them want to say 'Hey, I will get to class faster that way, or go run some errands on my bike,'" Allardt said.

MORTON'S PUB & GRUB

Ty Morton orders the plumbing guys to look around while peeling potatoes in one room and heating up large pots on the stove in another room. Stacey scrambles around, quickly combining ingredients to make her bread pudding; the chocolate cake is next. A lady in a suit walks in to discuss a radio event and Morton's sponsorship. I stand in the middle of the doorway connecting the two rooms, the middle of chaos, trying to snap a couple photos and catch a good quote. I helplessly watch the couple carry out their everyday tasks of owning Morton's Pub & Grub restaurant.

Starting out as a cook for the army, Ty Morton has years of restaurant experience under his belt. But after marrying his wife Stacey, moving to Florida and having a child, Ty traded his cooking in for a nine-to-five advertising job. Ten years of the work made Ty realize that he is just not cut out for the advertising business.



FT): Customers crowd up to the bar to eat dinner and enjoy a beer during Wednesday's Stout House, or open-mic night.
LOW): Morton's Pub & Grub offers over 200 beers, almost half of those being regional beers from Indiana and Illinois.
LOW RIGHT): Issac Pelering plays guitar during Morton's Stout House night. He uses performing as a release of stress.



(BELOW): Morton's kitchen is constantly cooking homemade Irish food. Ty hardly uses extra spices but relies on the slow cooking of food to give it its rich flavor.

(RIGHT): Ty Morton pours sugar into one of his homemade dishes.

(FAR RIGHT): Ty Morton hand washes all the dishes using a powerful hose.

We're not a table-turner place. We just want people to come in, cozy up, order some food. We tell people if they are in a hurry, they came to the wrong place.

Ty Morton, owner





“One of the things that happens to you is that when you start spending your whole day doing something that’s not making you happy, it winds up taking away all of your energy, so when you get off work you don’t have any energy to do anything else,” Ty said. “Then your whole life becomes about a job you hate.”

Moving back to Indiana gave Ty and Stacey the opportunity to start new. The Mortons wanted to start an Irish pub because, to put it bluntly, there just wasn’t one here in Muncie. Ty found the space just as it was closing and looking for new owners and took it as a sign to go for it. Several months later, Morton’s Pub & Grub opened in October 2007.

Morton’s Pub & Grub serves fresh traditional Irish dishes, along with several vegetarian and vegan varieties. The restaurant prides itself on its quality of food by using only fresh ingredients, buying locally grown meat and cooking everything homemade, even some dishes are cooked to order. It sponsors a true sense of the ‘Slow Food’ movement as customers come in to relax and enjoy their company and a beer as their food is being cooked.

“We’re not a table-turner place,” Ty said. “We just want people to come in, cozy up, order some food. We tell people if they are in a hurry, they came to the wrong place.”

Morton’s Pub & Grub provides the perfect atmosphere for Ball State students who like to relax in a chill environment, where they can read or work on homework as they enjoy a beer. The Pub offers over 200 beers, about half that are regional from Indiana and Illinois. Morton’s holds Guitar Hero Tuesdays, where anyone from beginner to novice can play Guitar Hero for free. Wednesdays are Stout House, an open-mic night for poets and musicians. Morton’s also provides live music on Friday nights.

Issac Pelering plays at Morton’s Stout House almost every week to release stress and because he loves the laid back atmosphere. He believes it’s a nice place to read or relax with friends and make good conversations.

“In the few years that I’ve been here, I haven’t found a place this comfortable to hang out,” Pelering said.

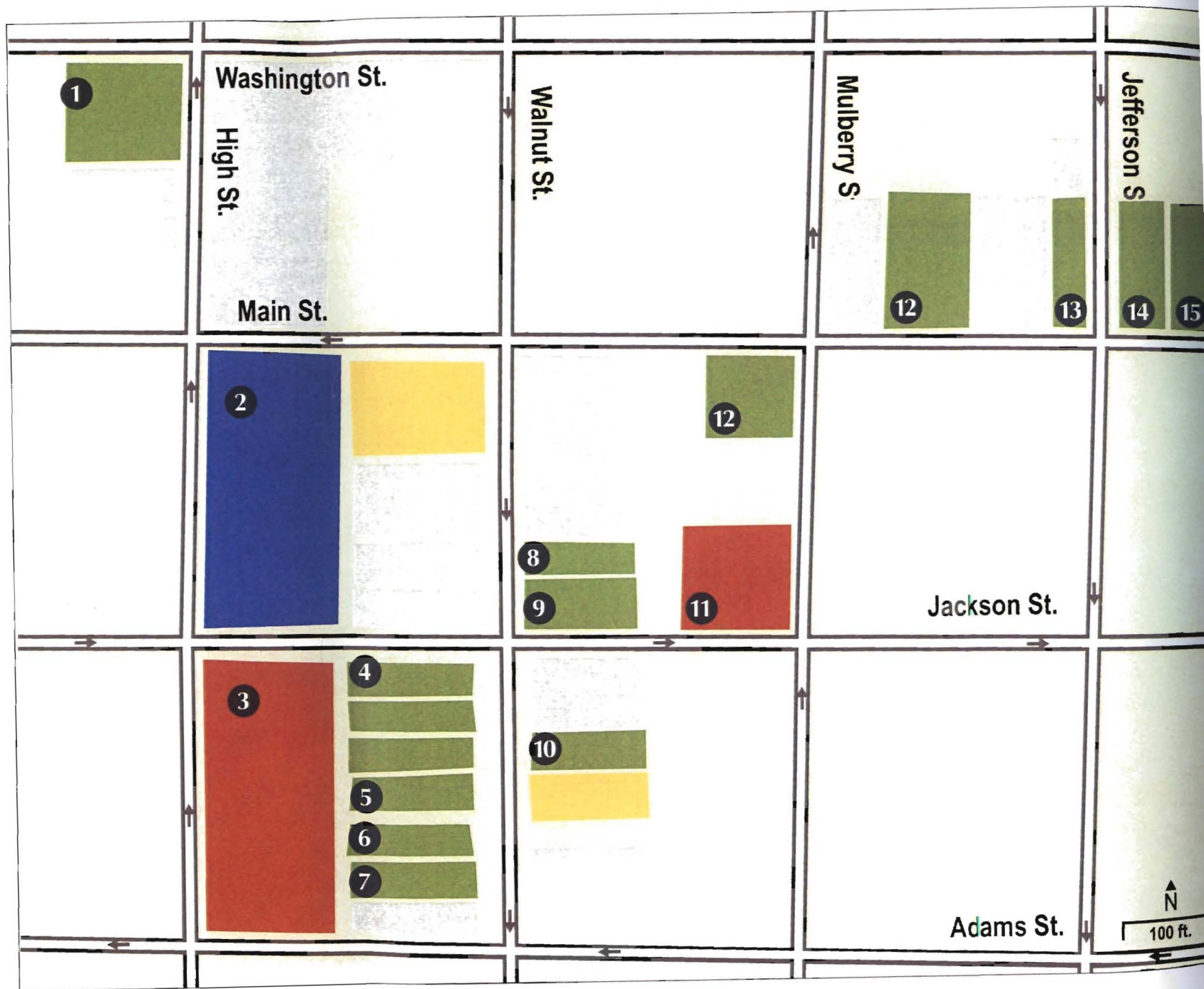


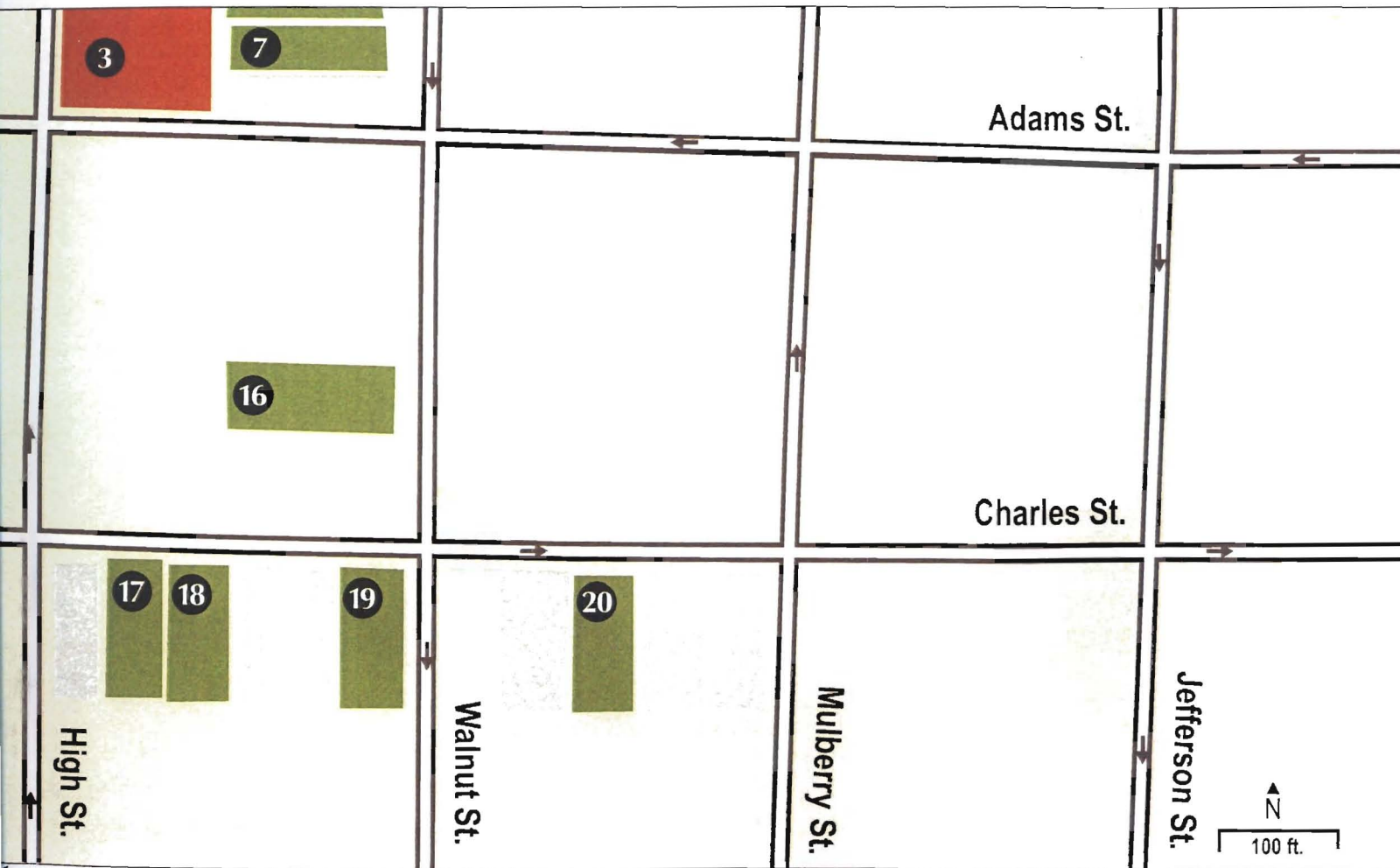


(FAR LEFT): Customers fill the tables at Morton's Pub & Grub on a Wednesday night.

(LEFT): Issac Pelering plays guitar on Morton's Stout House night. The restaurant has two rooms; one with tables and chairs and one with a comfy couch and chairs.

1. Mortons Pub & Grub
127 N. High St.
(765) 289 - GRUB (4782)
2. MITS
E. Jackson and High Streets
(765) 289 - MITS (6487)
3. Free Parking
4. Wishbone Gifts
201 S. Walnut St.
(765) 284 - 9409
5. Vera Mae's Bistro
207/209 S. Walnut St.
(765) 747 - 4941
6. Doc's Music Hall
215 S. Walnut St.
(765) 286 - 0949
7. The Heorot
219 S. Walnut St.
(765) 287 - 0173
8. Dandelions
120 S. Walnut St.
(765) 289 - 6363
9. Kirk's Bike Shop
124 S. Walnut St.
(765) 282 - 6389
10. Blue Bottle Coffee Shop
206 S. Walnut St.
(765) 284 - 3630
11. Free Two Hour Parking
12. Downtown Food Stand
125 E. Main St.
(765) 288 - 3775





- 13.** Gordy Fine Art & Framing
224 E. Main St.
(765) 284 - 8422!
- 14.** Jack's Camera Shop
300 E. Main St.
(765) 282 - 0204
- 15.** Gallery 308
308 E. Main St.
(765) 289 - 8575
- 16.** The Artist Within
313 S. Walnut St.
(765) 289 - 7895
- 17.** Normandy's Flower Shop
123 W. Charles
(765) 282 - 2263
- 18.** White River Landing
117 W. Charles
(765) 286 - 8133
- 19.** Cassella's Kitchen
401 S. Walnut
(765) 289 - 8980
- 20.** The Fickle Peach
117 E. Charles St.
(765) 282 - 5211